Quality Management And Its Stages

A project is defined as a sum of steps which are performed in a set time frame. The main difference between different projects is its distinguishable characteristics from one another. If the steps that follow are of poor quality it can put the whole project in jeopardy and of overall poor quality which is not acceptable anywhere in a professional environment. These days instead of just introducing new measures for doing tasks, quality management is given more consideration than ever. Maintaining quality is the best way to ensure a company's success because in the 21st century it's not just about profits and the production amount but about keeping the customer satisfied about the quality so that they stick around for long enough to be a loyal customer. Along with high quality of product the quality of the process with which the product is manufactured holds the same importance. If we maintain high standards of the quality of steps during the entire process we should be able to come up with an excellent product which will lead to high customer satisfaction which in turn brings long term success to the company.

As a new team, everyone is bound to make errors because the process is completely or relatively new to everyone and everyone is getting acquainted to it. All the errors that were made during the first cycle need to be found, researched on and preventive measures are need to be taken so that they are relatively less and/or completely eradicated. What this means for the long run is that after we are familiar with the kind of errors the team is prone to we are actually transitioning from risk/issue control to managing quality in such a way that the error didn't even occur in the first place. The team members get gelled up so well along with each other that they are less prone to falling for the same errors again. This helps the company in the following way: As the time passes by, following these high standard practices means less and less money is spent in quality control and the contingency period is spent in deciding what other good quality practices can be a part of the process or what practices can they carry over to the next project.

If we look at quality in project management from a granular level, it can be bifurcated into three different parts: Quality Planning, Quality Assurance and Operational Quality Management. [Content Server.pdf]

1.1 Quality Planning

As the name implies, if the planning of the project is excellent then so is the overall deliverable quality of the project. Planning in any company in my opinion should be based on a multi-layer or multi-stage model. This helps in ensuring that any errors which may put the project in jeopardy or put the product quality in becoming an average one are not missed. Setting high standards in the very beginning helps in maintaining a benchmark of quality assurance throughout the life cycle of the project.

Quality planning can serve as let's say a "Requirement matrix" or a check list which clearly outlines the do's and the don'ts at various checkpoints of a project which the team members should constantly remind themselves to ensure the required quality. All the do's and don'ts should be met to take the project into the next phase.

1.2 Quality Assurance

In order for a company to maintain cost effectiveness a company should have pre-defined procedures for registering, measuring, analyzing and improving. Every company has something called KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) which play a vital role in maintaining the standards set up for the project and they also help in pointing out the areas which require improvement and measures the speed and if the team is meeting the goals by the required time or not. A good quality assurance plan will always have plenty of these and they can be in any area. For example it can tell you the money spent vs time spent. Approx. if 12-16% of the project budget is spent or allocated to quality assurance it results in an excellent overall quality project. A project team must be prepared for additional quality assurance expenses in the name of complaints, maintenance and testing of defective products which is called Operational Quality Management and it will be discussed next.

1.3 Operational Quality Management

The basic idea of the above mentioned term is to invigilate the entirety of the project which are caused by complaints from within the project team, the organization or from customer feedback. Complaints originate from either a defective or a malfunctioning product. In such a situation an error correcting procedure or complaint procedure should be in place to take the necessary steps to solve a problem however critical it may be to maintain the highest quality of standards.

1.4 Product Control

For explaining this I will take an example of mass production of the popular "iPhone". A mandatory practice to ensure that the mass production doesn't turn out to be too expensive is to make sure tidiness and cleanliness of the environment. Any project has many product control procedures, in the case of iPhone, tidiness is a must because workers are dealing with putting a highly sensitive chip on a another set of highly sensitive components which can get destroyed by the slightest hint of dust particles.

This process exists in each every phase of the production of a mobile phone, a semi-finished control involves visually making sure that the phone is free of any glares, scratches, cracks or even screen defects. All of this is logged and kept for future reference, this helps in insuring high quality standards, the employees/workers are kept in check with the process because they know they have to follow certain standards.